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MARGARET MULLER

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"Laying her trembling hand upon my head, she said, 'Go on, my child; go on as you have begun, my dear, dear child.'"—*Page* 54.

MARGARET MULLER.

A STORY OF THE LATE WAR IN FRANCE.

BY

MADAME EUGENE BERSIER.

FREELY TRANSLATED

BY

MRS. CAREY BROCK.

AUTHOR OF "SUNDAY ECHOES IN WEEKDAY HOURS."

SEELEY, JACKSON, AND HALLIDAY, 54, FLEET STREET,
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MARGARET MULLER.

CHAPTER I.

MY GRANDMOTHER.

My grandmother is a very old woman. She has many things to tell us. She was twenty-two years old when she married, and came from Alsace to settle in our village of St. Rémy. She had often seen the great Emperor Napoleon, who constantly passed through our provinces on his way to his wars. At first, he was happy and successful, there seemed no limit to his power and his popularity; afterwards, every one owed him a grudge, and my grandmother used to feel quite sorry for him. She had seen kings go through

our village also, and the Emperor of Russia—all, she used to say, sent by God to punish the man who, in order to increase his own dominions, had deprived the poor French mothers of their sons.

I had always envied my grandmother the glory of having seen so many things. I used often to say to myself, that, however old I might grow, it would never be my fate to see anything worth seeing, and that I should never have anything to repeat to *my* grandchildren, when they gathered round me in my old age, in the chimney-corner, which would be worth the telling. I don't know, of course, what may have been happening in other parts of this big world since I came into it, but this I know for certain, that until quite lately I had never seen or heard anything in our part that was worth talking much about. I believe that great things have been going on elsewhere, wars and revolutions, but they did not affect us in our quiet corner.

We have never had but one ruler ever since I was born. One day has always been exactly

like another, no difference at all between yesterday and to-day, except such little difference as was made by the small gossip of the village, and I was beginning to feel quite tired of leading such a still, dull life. So young and strong as I was too, I felt myself made for something much more stirring. I said something of the kind to grandmother one day, when we had settled ourselves as usual for our evening talk in the twilight, she in her old-fashioned arm-chair in the chimney-corner, Charlot and I at her feet.

"Grandmother," I said, "I'm getting quite tired of never seeing anything new, especially when I hear you tell of all the things you've seen and heard in those exciting times."

My grandmother frowned at me from underneath her heavy tortoise-shell spectacles.

"Child," she said, "for the love of God never wish to see war, or you'll live to repent of it. I could wish that I had never seen any of the things that I tell you about, and if such things are to come over again, may the Lord in His mercy see fit to take me to my rest first."

She never spoke another word the whole evening, but remained buried in thought. And she looked at me so gravely that I felt a kind of repentance come over me, as though I had said something which I ought not to have said, and a kind of dread lest God should take me at my word, and give me some terrible thing which in my folly I had wished to have.

Now I understand well all that my grandmother was feeling, and wished to say. I have seen more during the last two months than I ever desired to see, and I would gladly forget the horrors, which it makes my blood run cold to remember. Our poor little village! Our poor old grandmother! Well might she say that it would be better for her to die first! Once in a lifetime is indeed enough. Old people cannot bear such things twice. As for me, it seems to me that my twenty years have been doubled during these few weeks. If I was careless and giddy before, I am not so now. Folly and frivolity ought not to live through such times.

CHAPTER II.

THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR.

We had been so quiet, so very quiet, in our old house, which did not stand quite in the village, but just at the entrance of the forest, hidden amongst the nearest trees, at the end of a lonely road. I had never felt the least frightened at living there alone with our grandmother, and my little brother Charlot. No one would have been the better for trying to molest us. And one thing is certain—if we had not lived where we did, in our out-of-the-way corner, we should have lost everything we possessed before now. Most probably, indeed, I should not be alive to tell my little tale of all that came to pass very soon after I had uttered my foolish wish, and grandmother had frowned at me, and replied to it with words of remonstrance and reproof.

Everybody said there was going to be war, and people began to look grave, but my mind was full of other thoughts. Pierre and I had so much to talk about now that there was a prospect of our long engagement coming at length to a happy end. We were hoping that we should very soon be able to get married, and grandmother used to say that our wedding-day would be the last festival day that she should have in this world, and that after it was over, and she had seen me well settled for life, with some one to take care of me and Charlot, she should be quite ready to go to the better things that were awaiting her in the next world. We had both of us saved up a little money; Pierre, as a labourer on Farmer Désiré's estate, and I by going out to work and mend for the neighbours. Pierre brought me all his savings, and I kept them with mine in the big chest.

Our village folk don't often read the newspapers; or when they do, the only papers they care about are the little journals printed in the neighbouring town, and what interests them most is the price of cheese, or wine, or such

like things. So that when the first detachment of soldiers passed through our village on their way to the frontier, we had only known just the evening before that war had been declared between France and Germany, and even then we did not trouble ourselves much about it. We thought that it would all take place a long way off, and that it would not be of much consequence to any one, except to the people who lived on the spot. As for me, my head was full of myself and Pierre, and my own concerns. I had forgotten all about my old wish to see and hear something new, and did not want anything to come and trouble me just now, and hinder me in my preparations for setting up housekeeping on my own account. The troops that we saw pass through the village did not excite much compassion. "The French are always victorious," we said one to another. And we reckoned up on our fingers all the battles we had gained. Grandmother alone shook her head and dried her eyes, and said, "Poor things! poor things!" I was busy with Pierre. There was no fear of *his* being taken away from me.

We saw each other every evening, and talked over our little affairs together as quietly and happily as though there had been no war. It was not to be in our own country, but in Germany.

I wonder how many soldiers and officers passed through the village afterwards. The generals went by rail. Only one thing troubled me. The *garde mobile*—that is to say, all the young men who were not soldiers—had been called out, by some new law which I knew nothing about. Pierre was called with the rest, but they left him quiet. There was no hurry, it seemed, there were plenty of men, and besides, there were not uniforms enough for all. These men were to protect the country at home. They were not to be sent out of the country. The country seemed in no need of protection just at present, and our brothers and friends remained quietly with us. Still we did not choose to be in ignorance of what was going on. So the schoolmaster, Monsieur Léonard, took in a newspaper, and every evening he read it aloud to any one who wished to come and listen. I

did not miss once, from the first day that he began to read. Pierre used to go with me, and then he spent the rest of the evening with us, repeating all we had heard to grandmother.

How soon things changed! How quickly the clouds gathered! We expected to hear every day that our army had crossed the Rhine, that they were fighting on the other side, and we thought that the Germans would soon have had enough of it. But there were long faces through the village when the first great bit of news came. The French had been beaten twice, and fighting had begun in France.

After this we became uncomfortable, and soon we grew very uneasy, and by and by every one was looking on the dark side. Every day the enemy was coming nearer, advancing into the country. It seemed to me that France was on fire, and that the fire was spreading, spreading, and that soon there would be no possibility of putting it out.

More soldiers kept passing—passing constantly. But our hearts were full of pity for these! They came from much greater dis-

tances than the others, by forced marches, without resting, even at night. Many of them had not tasted food for two days. Their faces were pale, and they were covered with dust. Their uniforms were no longer gay and beautiful. Any one could see that they had no heart for this war. Some of them even sank down by the road-side. The people in the villages through which they passed began to offer them assistance. The men would go a good bit of the road along with them to carry their knapsacks for them, and people stood waiting to give them bread, and wine, and hot soup, which they had got ready for them as soon as they had seen them coming in the distance.

I did not make myself as unhappy about them as some of our folk did, who were fathers and mothers. I have seen some of these turn aside and weep just to see them go by in such a pitiable condition. But I felt that if Pierre had been obliged to go along with them, I should indeed have seen enough of war —and little Charlot! the only one besides me

left out of a family of six—dear little Charlot who has been so delicate that we have had the greatest trouble in bringing him up, and who is now the delight of our lives, I thought as I caught him in my arms, and hugged him, how thankful I was that he was not older, and prayed in my heart that the war might be over before he was old enough to manage a gun. For they take away one's very children, and none dare say them nay. And yet to whom do these children belong? Do they not belong to their own fathers and mothers, to those who have nourished them, and brought them up, and who love them so well that they would rather have their hearts torn out of their bodies than give them up? Yet because kings and emperors choose to get up a quarrel, often too about some mere trifle, they take from us what does not belong to them; they force people to fight against their own inclinations, sometimes even against their own convictions and consciences; they take our dear ones from our very arms, and drive them to the slaughter-house against our wishes, and against theirs. It cannot be

right. It surely cannot be right or just. Oh dear! oh dear! my head has been ready to burst with troublesome thoughts since our misfortunes began.

CHAPTER III.

PIERRE'S DEPARTURE.

THINGS went from worse to worse. We lost every battle that was fought. Soon, we said to ourselves, we shall have no more soldiers to fight. What will they do then? Surely they will not send the *garde mobile?*

They very soon did. It was necessary now to defend the country, and they had to march. But Pierre did not wait to be called. Long before his orders arrived, he came to us as usual one evening when there had been very bad news. He had been so quiet and silent for some days, I could not think what was the matter with him, he scarcely seemed even to care for me. I was almost vexed with him. I knew it must be because of the news being always so bad, and I felt jealous of the country

and of politics. Men cared more for these things now than they did for their betrothed wives.

"Margaret," he said to me at length, after Charlot had gone away to bed; "I cannot go on any longer like this. If every one does not do his duty to the utmost of his power, France is lost. I have a gun which has known the touch of my hand for a good long time now. I am going to volunteer."

"Oh! Pierre," I exclaimed, and I know there was anguish in my cry, "oh, Pierre, why not wait till you're called?"

"Be brave, Margaret," he replied; "show yourself a true-hearted woman. I shall only love you the better for it when we are man and wife, if God lets us be married."

"But I would have let you go, Pierre, when the time came," I said, amidst my sobs.

"I must go now, Margaret; what further call would you wish me to wait for? Do you wish me to stand quietly by, with my arms crossed, and see the Germans swallow up France, when I have a heart and an arm to defend her? Or do you wish me to go and get

"Margaret," he said, "I cannot go on any longer like this. I am going to volunteer."—*Page* 18.

drilled with the rest of the lads, and waste my time learning a trade which I know well enough already. It surely is of some use to have known how to shoot and hit one's mark well, ever since one was twelve years old, as we country boys do, who have been brought up in the forests and mountains. And then who knows whether I shall ever be called? They say the Government has got more men on its hands already than it knows what to do with. They have not got guns enough for everybody. Perhaps we country boys may get overlooked altogether. And a fellow who has a good gun of his own, and knows how to manage it, ought to make some use of it."

"Take me with you, Pierre," cried a voice in the distance. It was Charlot, who we thought had been fast asleep in his bed long ago; "take me with you, I will be very good."

I ran into the next room. At first I was very angry, and scolded my poor little brother, who had sat up in his bed, in order to listen better to what we were saying. Then I squeezed him in my arms, and flung myself

on his pillow, and cried my heart out. When I remembered Pierre, and went back into the kitchen, he was gone, and grandmother was alone in the chimney-corner. I threw myself down on my knees beside her, and hid my face in her lap. She stroked my hair with her hands, which were trembling violently.

"We must not wish to keep our men, Margaret," she said; "this love of war is born in them. It is a part of their nature, and it is well that it should be so. You see the child Charlot is already longing to go. It is a mercy that they have not to be driven to fight."

When Pierre came next day, he told me that he had volunteered, and that he must go to Paris to be equipped and enrolled. Would he return again to our village? No one knew. In spite of my sorrow I was proud of him, for I knew that he was true and brave, and I longed to see him in his uniform. But when he wished me good-bye, it seemed to me as though I saw him dead, and I could not stand for trembling. He took me in his arms, and I saw that there were tears in his eyes,

though he turned away his face—that I might not see them, as I knew. He told me to pray always for him, said that I must keep up my heart, that all would go well, and that in the autumn we should begin life together.

I was not at all brave. I did not behave well; still I said nothing to discourage him. I did not try to keep him, and perhaps he was not sorry to see how much I loved him. One cannot always say so when things are going smoothly.

Everything seemed a blank after Pierre was gone. I never even heard what news there were to hear, for grandmother would not let me go out any more in the evenings. She said there were too many soldiers abroad in the country, and one could not tell what might happen.

At length we were told that the enemy was coming nearer. I lost all heart in my work. It seemed to me that this war was going to deprive us of everything. The neighbours said that they were burning down whole villages, and that the peasantry were shot down, if they

attempted to offer any resistance. I felt almost glad now that Pierre was gone, for he would never have let them take possession of our village—not he! Our people were just finishing gathering in the harvest, working, it is true, without much heart. Those who possessed anything of value carefully concealed it in secret places. We had nothing but the house and the little garden, and a little land in the "Plaine des Noyers;" but when I saw what others were doing, I took all my money and Pierre's out of the big chest, and buried it in a corner of the woodhouse.

Pierre had always greatly wished to see Paris, and in bygone days he used to threaten me that he would go there for a trip before he got married.

"After a man's married," he would say, laughingly, "he is no longer his own master; he can't do things for himself, but must think of others first. And I would go all the way on foot."

He had a cousin there who, he said, would be sure to receive him kindly. I thought he

reckoned upon his hospitality much too readily. It used to be one of our subjects of dispute. It is curious how lovers do dispute about something or other. And now that Pierre's wish was gratified, and he was at Paris, the letters he wrote me were not too cheerful. He did not care at all for what he had so greatly wished to see. Besides, he was obliged to go about so much from place to place before he could get his outfit, that he was fairly tired out. And then they told him that his gun—the gun that he had been so proud of—was an old-fashioned thing and of no use at all. I suppose it could not make cruel wounds and injure people like the new ones they are inventing now-a-days. Pierre was obliged to leave it at his cousin's house, and I know he will have been very sorry to part with it, he was so much attached to his gun. It had belonged to his father, who was gamekeeper in the forest of Ardennes, and quite a great sportsman. Pierre wrote to me that he was under orders to join MacMahon's army, which was going through Châlons to the north, to try and join the

army of Metz. They meant to fall together on the enemy, who were advancing in this direction from all sides. It comforted me in my grief to know that Pierre was coming into our neighbourhood once more. Perhaps we might soon meet.

But were they going to fight at St. Rémy? This thought came upon us suddenly, almost at the last moment. People began to say that it was no longer safe to remain in our little village, that the Prussians would soon be passing through, since they were coming all at once from all parts of Germany. They were crossing the frontier everywhere. It was said too that they did much more mischief in the country than in the towns, for that in the towns the officers kept watch over them. The richest amongst our folks began to turn out of their houses—they could carry away their money; but those who had nothing but their houses did not like to abandon them. As for me, I certainly could not take away my poor, infirm old grandmother; and then, we had nothing to live upon except the potatoes, which would soon

be ready to eat, and a few vegetables, besides the milk of our pretty black goat, which I would not have abandoned for all the world, and the pig, which was ready to kill and which we had expected to make a good concern of. Better remain where we were and trust ourselves to God's care than go away to die of hunger at Triey, the nearest town, where so many people had already taken refuge that we were told they were obliged to sleep in the streets, unless they could afford to pay handsomely for a lodging.

I began to pray truly to God, asking Him to take care of us during this dreadful war. I had never really prayed before. For prayer is not real prayer unless we do really desire what we ask God for. It was the only thing that comforted me now. But it did comfort me very much. Now that the storm has passed over us, I hope I shall never cease to keep up this habit of prayer. It would be very ungrateful, very wicked, and I shall always have to thank God for preserving us through such a time as came upon us afterwards.

Meetings were constantly being held in the village,—at the inn, everywhere. This was a matter of course. The men did little else now but talk, and swear at the enemy. The women spent their time crying in one another's houses, and things went on as best they could in their own. The *gardes mobiles* were all gone to the camp, where they were learning to be soldiers. The men of middle age who remained at St. Rémy said they belonged to the National Guard, and wished to prevent the Prussians from entering. But there were only two or three amongst them who had guns, and our mayor, Farmer Daniel, instead of busying himself in trying to find arms for them, thought only of looking after his own property. He ordered that not a shot should be fired, on pain of punishment, declaring that it would only hasten our own destruction, and bring down fire upon us. This caused great division. Some declared that the mayor was right: they were the cowards. Others were indignant, and declared that it was just through this fine sort of reasoning in towns and villages that one

quarter of France had been already taken; and that it was always something to have knocked down a few of the enemy: it was doing one's duty as a citizen so far as one could. Old Abraham was amongst these, and yet he is rich, as rich as the mayor, and has quite as much to lose.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PRUSSIANS AT ST. REMY.

One day, at noon, Charlot ran in, quite out of breath, to tell us that Monsieur Léonard was closing the school. Some peasants working in the fields, in the neighbourhood, had seen troops in the distance.

But they were our own soldiers, some regiments that had been delayed, and that were coming up from Alsace, in order to reach the main army as quickly as possible. They were in a pitiable condition, yet one could not even offer them a glass of water, they were in such haste to press forward. One would have thought that they were being pursued by the enemy.

Monsieur Léonard had been in a terrible hurry to close the school. It is curious how

one never knows people until the time of trial comes. When he used to read the paper to us, it seemed as though he were burning to exterminate the enemy with his own hand, and he has been the first to take to his heels.

The last detachment of French had scarcely passed when a report ran through the village that one could see from the belfry of the church a long black line approaching. Then the mayor gave orders that no one was to move, everybody was to stay quietly in his own house, to refuse the enemy nothing which it was in our power to give them. I believe he was ready to lay the cloth for them, and prepare their dinner beforehand. I shall never forget that day. It was in the end of August, and it was then that I began to see horrors and to know what that awful thing, war, meant. I was out at work by the week, at Martha Bory's, whose baby gave her no peace, and where there was no end of mending to do. It was always so much the more gained for me, and, besides, at Martha's I had a chance of hearing more news. So many people came in and out of her house,

and but few people came to ours. When the first Uhlans appeared at the end of the village street, no one seemed able to breathe. These passed without halting. They were couriers, and passed like arrows. We were behind the window-panes, trying to see them without being seen.

"The enemy, the enemy!" cried Martha, turning as white as a sheet. "But they seem in great haste. They will perhaps leave us alone, and go on their way."

"Oh, Martha!" I exclaimed, "if every one spoke like that, the Germans would soon be our masters."

"You may make your mind easy, Margaret," said Jacques Bory, appearing at this instant with his gun, cleaned and loaded, on his shoulder. "The next comers will not be allowed to pass quite so easily."

He drew near the window and looked out into the street. I came behind him and peeped over his shoulder. Martha and the children shrank away to the other end of the room.

I saw the high road in the distance full

"He drew near the window, and looked out into the street. I came behind him, and peeped over his shoulder."—*Page* 32.

of horsemen. One could already hear the tramp of the horses' feet.

They halted when they got into the village, and soon had spread themselves all over it, stopping at all the houses, knocking at the doors with the butt-end of their muskets. The doors were opened to them immediately. Every one seemed ready to yield.

"Cowards! mean-spirited wretches! women!" muttered Jacques Bory between his teeth. "Let them come to me, that's all."

The blows of the muskets resounded at the door, making the whole house shake. They seemed to expect to find every door wide open to receive them, and were furious in their impatience.

Jacques leant out of the window, lowered his musket, and fired. I heard a groan, and then fearful oaths.

"There's one done for, at all events," cried Jacques, with a strange smile of satisfaction. And he came back into the room, and sheltered himself behind the wall to reload his gun. He was a kind-hearted man too, was Jacques!

"Oh hide yourself! hide yourself!" said Martha under her breath. "Jacques, Jacques! have you no wife, no children?"

But Jacques paid no attention to her. He was ready to sacrifice his life, and all that made life precious to him, for the honour of St. Rémy. He took aim at another horseman. At the same moment a gun was fired from below, and our poor Jacques fell heavily upon me, before he had been able to fire. I fell with him, for I had no strength to bear his weight. The children screamed. Martha rose up like a lioness; she picked up the loaded gun, and fired—she, Martha! There was a shout of rage from the Uhlans below.

Holding her baby in her arms, she stood up at the window. "Kill us all now," she cried wildly, "kill us quickly. It is nothing to us now."

But they had not reached that pitch of bloody conflict when men massacre women and children. Though it came to the same thing, for whilst we were standing round Jacques, who still lingered, though in agonies of pain, they

set fire to the house. We only perceived what they had done when a thick cloud of smoke filled the room.

There was a back door to the house which led across the garden to our cottage. I took the two children and fled, leaving Martha to give her last attentions and her last tender farewells to her poor husband. I had soon reached our house, where no one had heard or seen anything.

"Grandmother," I cried, "take care of these poor little children, and don't let Charlot stir out of the house. The enemy are at St. Rémy, but they won't come here. You may keep your mind quiet."

And I was about to run back again without taking breath; I could not let Martha be burnt to death beside her dead husband if I could help it—when Charlot caught hold of me.

"Who fired at the enemy?" he cried, imperatively.

"Papa did," replied little Jacques; "he is dead."

"Oh, Margaret! don't go back," cried grandmother.

"I must, grandmother," I said, "I am going to look for Martha. It is my duty. I shall be back there again in a moment."

But to return to my poor neighbour had already become impossible. Later in the day I could not even find the two bodies amidst the heap of dead.

There was a fearful commotion throughout the village. The wind was high, and the fire gained ground rapidly.

Others besides Jacques must, I suppose, have resisted. I do not know whether they had or not, but the sight I saw in the distance was a fearful one. Our poor simple village folk, our nearest neighbours, old Abraham amongst them, the honoured, white-headed old man, shot dead at their own doors. All my life long I shall hear their voices pleading for mercy. I found myself in the midst of the women and children who had taken refuge in the ground behind the houses, and through a little lane I could see something of what was

going on in the high street. Fresh soldiers were continually coming in who carried on the terrible work the others had begun. Soon our poor St. Rémy was on fire from end to end. But the fire was nothing compared with the slaughter, with the cries of the peasantry, imploring the enemy, with clasped hands, to spare their lives. The Germans appeared not to understand them. I wonder whether there would be less war on the earth if every one spoke the same tongue. If they could have understood poor Nicholas Dumoulin, telling them that he had five little children, and that their mother was dead, perhaps—for they say that they have nearly all left their own wives and children at home—perhaps they might have had pity on him, and would not have fired a shot right into his breast immediately afterwards.

I wished I could have gone to fetch his poor little children, and carried them to our house, but my courage failed me at the sight of such horrors. Later one of the neighbours took care of them. God does not allow the orphan to be forsaken.

I no longer felt frightened. I looked around upon the desolation as one petrified.

At length this first body of German troops had passed. The enemy had taken care to remove as much of the cattle as they possibly could out of reach of the fire, whilst they left the poor people to perish shrieking in the flames. When we were left alone in our misery the village continued burning, and no one tried to extinguish the flames. What had we left indeed? I hope all those are not dead whom we have never seen since. Numbers have been taking shelter in the forest for many days past.

CHAPTER V.

THE HOMELESS.

It was not long before there was quite a little camp established around our cottage. People felt more safe in our out-of-the-way retreat, and then the trees formed a roof for them. I did what I could. I brought as many to our house as it could possibly be made to hold. These were old and sick people, and Martha's children; we fed the poor little baby with the milk of our black goat. I gave up my bed, and so did Charlot. We collected the dry straw out of the fields, and leaves and dry moss to make mattresses, and in some houses we found still some provisions and some tools remaining. All took their turn in going to see what they could find, and bring back everything that could be of any use. We made soup once a day for everybody. How many

nights they spent out in the open air, under the glorious stars, and under the grand old oaks, poor unhappy creatures! Through God's mercy the weather continued dry, but the nights were beginning to get very cold, and I think that Sebastian's poor widow, who they say has been in a consumption for some time, would have died if she had not found a shelter in our house.

We lived like gipsies, but then we had not been accustomed to such a hard life as they live. The sight of all those poor neighbours, whom I had known so well ever since I was born, and of our poor abandoned and ruined village, broke my heart. And yet in the midst of my anguish, I felt something like a joyful feeling within me, for I felt that courage had come to me in the moment of danger; and then it is so cheering to be able to help others.

One would have said that we were all one family. All disputes, all jealousies, were forgotten—all the little trifling subjects of envy and unpleasantness that are to be found in villages.

The Germans continued passing, but without doing us any further injury. We had nothing now for them to take. We asked ourselves and one another, sometimes, when we had time to think of others, and were not altogether absorbed in our own troubles, "What is going on elsewhere?" And sometimes we fancied that we could hear the rumbling of cannon in the distance like the sound of distant thunder. But it appears that the great battle had not then taken place.

One morning, at daybreak, we had been awakened—that is to say, those amongst us who had been able to sleep—by the unmistakeable roll of cannon. It did not come from one quarter only, but in front, on the left, and on the right; it was like a tremendous storm, as if peals of thunder were resounding on all sides, only that it was far more terrible than any storm, for we knew that every peal carried death with it, and that this was the hand of man seeking to destroy his fellow-man. Must our poor soldiers be slain thus by hundreds? French and German I seemed now to pity all

alike. When they lie together, dead upon the field of battle, they are no longer enemies. What strikes me as so horrible in war is that, when those who are in authority have a dispute, those who are under their command have to try and get up a feeling of hatred against their fellow-creatures, that they may be able to carry out their orders. Now with us in our little quarrels, we don't ask anybody else to fight instead of us. Pierre fights his own battle if he has to fight; he does not send Paul to fight for him. However, it was necessary now to drive the strangers out of the country. It was no longer as it was at the beginning of the war, when men fought without knowing why.

The thick of the fight was not going on very close to us, but it was getting nearer on one side, whilst on the other it was going farther off. There seemed to be little battles going on alongside the great battle, and sometimes it appeared as though they were fighting just behind the village. But no one went to see. If ever I desired to be deaf, like grand-

mother, it was then. I felt no more curiosity, no more desire to see and know things, as I used to do before that dreadful day when the Uhlans came into the village. But a voice within my heart said to me sometimes, "When the fighting is over, there will be work for you to do amongst the dead and the dying." And every day I prayed to God now to strengthen me and prepare me for what I might have to do.

Meanwhile one day passed like another. I went and came backwards and forwards from our house to our little camp. I took care of the children. I got ready the provisions. Some of the women had picked up their courage again, but they had enough to do to mind their children and wash their clothes. I had no one to help me but little Anna Meyer. Anna learned a great deal in that time. And so, I am sure, did I. We did not trouble ourselves for nothing then, or make a fuss about trifles. We shall not be hard to please in future.

One day, about four o'clock in the after-

noon, after all our people had been well attended to, I made my escape in order to climb up by myself on the "Roche de la Fontaine." I could see a part of the field of battle from there. They were fighting close to the churchyard; and for the first time I felt that there were moments in one's life when one was not sorry to be an orphan. A world in which such dreadful things go on is not much to be regretted. My poor father and mother, over whose loss I had shed so many, many tears, they are in peace; there where people love each other, and there is no quarrelling. I did not wish now to have kept them on earth. Alas! it is all one big churchyard now, all around us! I could see the soldiers chasing each other; they fired as they fled; they thrust at one another with their bayonets; they were falling continually, wounded or dead. I could hear the cries of the combatants. I think they were the voices of those who have no hope, yet who fight to the last; the cries of the brave.

I came down the hill again. My legs

were trembling so much that I was obliged to sit down for a few minutes at the foot of the rock.

I had plenty to do. I should have to get our poor people removed further into the wood, for if the enemy were to come down upon us now, heated from this battle, they would be like madmen, and it would be more dreadful than before. I said a few words of prayer. Then I felt quite brave again; and then came that strange, joyful feeling of having something to do in this world—something good.

As I was hastening back, I thought: "We have Monsieur Léonard with us. He is the only man we have left who is young and strong. We must give him something to do. It is high time."

After the fire, Monsieur Léonard had suddenly appeared amongst us, as though he had come out of the bowels of the earth. During the fighting, and during the fire, nothing had been seen of him. When the danger was over he came out of the wood, very hungry, and wanting something to eat. But he has not

been of the smallest use. He can't even keep the children quiet when they are making noise enough to drive one mad, and we are all busy.

I knew very well where to find him—at the foot of his own particular tree, where he sat during the greater part of the day, pretending to read out of an old worm-eaten book which he had found in his pocket—as if anybody could possibly read at such a time! and as if it was not one's duty, when one has no wife or children of one's own, to take care of other people's. Our former schoolmaster, poor old Master Jacob, who taught me all I know, loved his pupils as though he had been their father; and yet he was an old bachelor! But I won't say anything more against Monsieur Léonard, especially as he too has changed very much for the better since then.

"You must show a little more courage, Monsieur Léonard," I said to him when I got back. "When men are not fighting in the battle themselves, they must take care of the women and the weak. I suppose you are not

"You must show a little more courage, Monsieur Léonard," I said to him when I got back.—*Page* 48.

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going away again all by yourself out of our sight or knowledge."

He felt the tone of contempt there was in my words, no doubt; but I could not help speaking as I did, for the life of me. He was not the schoolmaster now. He was just a cowardly man! And who can stand a man being a coward? I never shall. And when I think, too, that people wondered how I could prefer my poor Pierre to him! Pierre has not got his learning, it is true, but he's worth a hundred of him, for all that. Because I was quicker at learning than other girls, he took a fancy to me; but I could never have taken a fancy to him, even before all this.

I think, though, that it hurt Monsieur Léonard more to be spoken to in this way by me, than if I had been somebody else.

He turned very red, and looked very vexed; but he restrained himself. He seemed too angry to speak, and I felt sorry for having been quite so sharp.

"What do you want me to do?" he said, at length, quite mildly.

"They are fighting quite close to this," I answered, feeling rather ashamed of myself. "Don't you think that our people here will run great risk of being further ill-treated if the enemy were to come upon them? Leave all those who cannot sleep out in the open air in our cottage, and take charge of all the others to the grottoes of Avon, where we may be very sure no strangers will ever find them. Do not forget to take plenty of fuel, and settle them there as well as you can, poor creatures. By to-morrow, perhaps, the danger will be over."

Monsieur Léonard looked at me. I showed no fear, for I did not feel any. A change appeared to come over him. He seemed to be quite ready to do what I asked. It is strange that he should not have thought of doing anything without being asked.

"And you," he said—"who will take care of you, and of those who stay?"

"I am accustomed now to take care of myself," I replied, "and I have learned to take care of others since we have been living out here in the wood; but when you have

settled our poor people down there, they will be able to do without you. There will be work for us to do here, after all the fighting that is going on."

When the neighbours knew that the armies were quite close, they very soon made ready to start. Even those who were scarcely strong enough to walk were resolved to go. They knew what it was in the power of the enemy to do. I watched the sad procession melting out of sight in the distance, winding their melancholy way through the thick trees, by the parting rays of the setting sun—a rose-coloured sun, which tinged the trees with a glorious fire, to illuminate such a sight as that!

CHAPTER VI.

THE BATTLE-FIELD.

VERY few people had remained with us in our little cottage. The poor little orphans, Jacques and Martha Bory's two children, Anna Meyer, Sebastian's sickly widow, grandmother, Charlot, and I, that was all. Poor little Anna has never known what has become of her parents since the fire. They were working in the fields at the time. No one saw anything of them afterwards.

I shared the milk of the goat amongst them, with a good bit of bread to each. Grandmother went early to bed very much exhausted. I went and knelt down beside her. She seemed to understand that I was wanting her to bless me, and laying her wrinkled and trembling hand on my head, she said—

"Go on, my child; go on as you have

begun, my dear, dear child. Do all you can. It is a sore trial to be old and infirm in such times as these. Do your work, Margaret, in the name of our merciful Saviour."

I went out. It was almost quite night. The sound of the firing had ceased about half an hour before. Silence reigned all around now —a silence so profound that it struck cold upon my heart. But I felt that I must only think of what there was to do. I had taken with me a pitcher of water, a glass, and some linen. I felt very sorry not to have asked one or two of the women to stay with me. I believe they would have taken courage, as Monsieur Léonard did. And I should have been so much less frightened than I was now, all alone!

Near the house, under the trees, it was black as death. The dew was falling and the air felt damp and chill. The sky was a deep blue, shining with stars. Suddenly, just as I got out into the road, I stumbled against some one. Oh! how frightened I was!

"Margaret! it's *you*," exclaimed a voice that I knew, oh so well!

And the next moment I was clinging to Pierre, weeping, and yet happy—so happy. But not as I used to be, not a bit as I used to be.

Pierre made me sit down by the side of the road and let me recover myself, he standing by, holding my hand.

"Now," he said at length, "we must no longer think only of ourselves. The time for that is past, my Margaret; where were you going all by yourself at this hour of the night?"

"I was going to look after the sick," I said, feeling a little unhappy that Pierre should even suppose that I could be thinking of myself; "I wished to help all I could wherever it was possible to do so. All day long I have been feeling that I must go to the field of battle when the fighting should be over, that there would be work for me to do then."

"And what are you carrying there?" he asked. I knew by his voice that he was not displeased. "Have you something for them to drink?"

"Water," I replied, "fresh water from our spring."

"That is well," he answered, "we will not lose time. Come, let us go this way, for it will be quicker."

And he took the pitcher from me, with his left arm, as I remembered afterwards, and led me through a narrow road towards the churchyard. We were soon under the churchyard wall. My courage almost failed me. I knew that what I was going to see would be very dreadful. The moon was rising. Soon it would be bright moonlight. This thought made me feel yet more frightened.

In the churchyard and all around I heard groans. I often fancy that I can hear them now. The grove of thick trees that lies close beside was no doubt also full of poor unfortunate beings, for we heard cries from those who had enough strength left to cry aloud.

It was beginning to be light enough now to see bodies lying, or seated on the ground, or leaning for support against the wall or the trees.

"Courage, comrades!" cried Pierre, "here is help and water. Come this way with me, Margaret," he added.

I don't know how he could find his way about as he did on that dreadful battle-field.

He led me on much farther, across a large meadow which reached as far as the high-road to Triey. A deep ditch ran along the side of the road. This ditch was full of dead and wounded. It was one great heap of bodies. And the moon at this moment shone in full light upon them.

Pierre led me still farther on, where, a little apart from the others, an officer was lying at the bottom of the ditch, his head supported against the bank.

"Our colonel," he said to me.

Then, kneeling on the ground, he said to him, "Sir, here is drink—fresh water."

There was no answer. I saw a large dark stain on the grass beside his white, white face. I knew that it was blood.

I grew brave, and kneeling down beside him also, I dipped some of the linen in water, and moistened his forehead and his lips. Then I

made a bandage, and tied it round his head to stop the blood. But Pierre told me that he had lost too much already to be able to recover. He had a bullet through his breast also.

"He is quite young," Pierre said to me, "a valiant soldier, who has earned for himself rapid promotion. His orderly, Michael, tells me that he has a young wife and a little child."

"May God have pity on them!" I sighed. "Oh, Pierre, what shall we do with all these poor people who are yet alive?"

"We must get them taken to the houses at St. Rémy. I suppose all the people have not run away from there. Has no one thought of coming out here to see what they could do—no one but you?"

"Ah, Pierre, there is no one to come. Everybody who was not either killed or burnt when the enemy set fire to the village has fled to the forest, with everything that they were able to save from the general pillage. The people are all scattered. There is nobody left but a few old and infirm folk, who are taking refuge near here."

"Well," said Pierre, with something like indignation in his voice, "these poor people must be seen to somehow. We must find a shelter for the wounded somewhere. If we could only get an ambulance! But the field of battle covers more than ten leagues of country."

"Pierre," I said, "don't you think that between us two, we could carry your colonel to our cottage?"

"If my right arm were not broken," sadly replied Pierre, who had seated himself in the ditch, beside his dying officer.

"Your right arm broken," I exclaimed; and I could not restrain one cry of misery.

"You must have known it sooner or later," he said, "and oh, Margaret, what is a broken arm, compared with what others have had. Only it makes me useless." And in this, at that moment, lay the bitterness.

I wanted to see his arm, which I then perceived hung by his side, powerless. Only the doctor could do anything for him, and when should we be able to get a doctor?

"My poor Pierre," I exclaimed, "well, you must remain here, and I will go and see what help I can find. Every one must set to work to help all he can."

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHURCHYARD.

NOTHING frightened me any more. I felt as brave as a lion. I, who would not, in former days, have gone through the churchyard after dark for anything that one could have offered me. I took the pitcher with me, and gave a draught of cold water to as many as I could, as I went along. When the pitcher was empty, I called out to those who were screaming to me to bring them some also—

"Courage! I am coming; I am going to fetch some. You will soon be attended to."

God be praised! I met Monsieur Léonard at a few steps distance from our house.

"I have left everybody settled amongst the rocks," he said; "what can I do more?"

He spoke to me as though he had been my pupil and I his former schoolmaster.

"Do," I exclaimed, "oh! there is so much to do, so very much, as you will soon see. Only wait one moment for me."

I ran as fast as I could to our house. I refilled my pitcher, took some sheets out of the big chest—I had just made up some nice new ones, which grandmother had spun herself, ready for when I should be married. I told Anna to get my bed out of grandmother's room, and make it up in the kitchen, to keep a light burning, and a good fire, and the water boiling in the kettle. We were going to bring a wounded officer to the house.

As I went back, Monsieur Léonard following, for I would not let him carry the pitcher, which was my one comfort, I gave the poor soldiers a draught of water along the road. One of them thanked me in German. Then I felt braver than before, the strange joyful feeling rose up yet more strongly in my heart, for I knew he was an enemy.

I found my poor Pierre where I had left him, sitting by his colonel. The light of the moon was shining full upon them now, and I saw, as

I had not seen before, how very ill he looked—how pale and worn. But I was not there to look at Pierre. He helped us as much as he could with his one arm, and putting all our strength together, we succeeded in stretching the colonel on one of the sheets, but when we came to try to carry him away, I felt what a poor thing I was. I was seized with terror, lest I should never be able to help Monsieur Léonard to get him as far as home, and the poor wounded gentleman would die on the way.

"Stop," cried a man's voice, "I am coming to help you."

And a soldier drew near—such a tall, stout man. I believe he could have carried the wounded officer alone.

"Michael!" exclaimed Pierre, "thank God you have come, for it was He who sent you. We would not leave him to die here, and I—I am of no use with this broken arm."

Michael looked tenderly at his master. "It breaks my very heart to see him in this state," he said, "I was close to him when he fell, and I thought of his wife, and of his little daughter.

I was there when he wished them good-bye. I have been driven ever so far away in the battle, and have had such difficulty in getting back."

He told Monsieur Léonard what to do, and the two men raised the wounded officer as gently as possible in their arms, and set forward at a snail's pace. Pierre and I followed. When I put my right hand within his left arm I felt that he was trembling. It was from fever; Pierre would not have trembled otherwise. I saw too that he could scarcely walk, he was so weak, and it was I that supported him, not he me.

"Michael has been the colonel's servant for a long time," he said; "he is deeply attached to him. Think, Margaret," he added, "that you have only seen to-night one little corner of this dreadful war, and that there are leagues and leagues of ground covered over to-night with similar scenes. In some places—I have seen it myself—the bodies are lying in heaps upon each other like reaped corn. And all in vain! The day is lost, I believe."

Often the soldier fights on in his place with

his regiment without knowing how things in general are going. He only learns what the issue of the day has been when all is over. But Pierre was not mistaken. Since noon the French had been routed, and early in the morning the marshal had been wounded, and that had destroyed all hope.

We went on, with measured steps and heavy hearts, as though we were at a funeral.

"With a bullet through the breast as the colonel has had," said Pierre, "the least shake might cause suffocation."

I saw bodies lying all around us, some stretched upon their backs, others with their faces to the ground. Some of them lay in deep shadow; others were lighted by the rays of the white moon, which shone upon them in a ghastly way. Some faces were calm and peaceful, others very terrible to look upon. And across the low wall of the cemetery, we could see bodies stretched upon the tombs, and soldiers, still living, who held up their arms imploringly for us to go to them.

Oh! how I wished I had had a whole

regiment of sisters of charity with me to go to their aid.

We passed the poor German soldier again on our way back to the cottage. As I am half Alsatian myself, on my mother's side, I knew enough German to be able to tell him that we were coming back to him.

When the colonel had been got into bed, and made as comfortable as it was in our power to make him, he revived a little, and looked at us with such gratitude in his eyes that I burst into tears.

We made up a bed for Pierre on the ground beside the colonel, and he threw himself upon it and closed his eyes. He was as pale as death, and I turned away my head, for I could not bear to see him.

"Now," said Monsieur Léonard, "where shall we go to find a doctor? Where are all the army surgeons?"

Michael shrugged his shoulders.

"They are working like negroes," he replied, "I have seen several of them, but at a good distance from this. I might be all night trying

to find one without succeeding, unless, indeed, a detachment of the red cross ambulance should arrive. Not that there is any want of help, or that the wounded have been neglected; never has there been so much help provided, I believe; but then never before has there been so much mischief done."

What were we to do now? I saw plainly that Michael did not like to leave his officer's side for a moment, fearful, no doubt, lest he should die during his absence. And then he was so exhausted, poor fellow, after fighting hard all day. Perhaps, too, the colonel might wish to say something to him, to give him some parting directions when it came to the last.

Charlot stood by all this time, watching us attentively. He did not speak a word. But preoccupied as I was, I could see that he did not lose a word of what we were saying. At ten years old, a child has some power of judgment and of action. And in such times, these powers become very rapidly developed, so I said to him—

"Charlot, you shall help us. You can go

to the grottoes, and ask Susanne and Bertha to come here and work with us. Be quick—as quick as ever you can."

The poor little man made no objection, though all his life he has always had such a dread of being out alone at night.

"I must go back to the field with Léonard," I said, "and see if we cannot succeed in bringing another of these poor creatures here;—and by the time we get back the women will be here to help," I added, to poor little Anna, whom I was obliged to leave in sole charge of the house and its unfortunate inmates.

When we reached the cemetery we caught sight of lanterns and dark figures gliding in and out amongst the wounded and the dead.

"Can they be robbing the dead?" said Léonard. I saw that he was trembling, and he drew me behind the wall, and forced me to remain concealed there for a few moments. I did not understand what he was talking about, for such an awful idea would never have entered my mind. That dreadful knowledge came with other strange things at that awful time.

To rob the dead! Who could imagine such a degree of horror? And yet, and yet, that is not even all. Often the wounded are put out of the way by these worse than murderers, that they may get more pillage.

And the cry of their wickedness goes up to a righteous God and brings down vengeance.

But no, God be praised, it was not the figures of these monsters of iniquity that Monsieur Léonard saw. They were the nurses of whom Michael had spoken. The ambulance had arrived. They were carrying water to the thirsty, binding up the wounds of the suffering, speaking words of comfort to their souls. On the high road, beyond the ditch, stood two large covered carriages resembling carrier's waggons.

Once assured of this we took courage indeed, and drew near with lighter hearts than we had yet had. We found a doctor on the ground, and several young people, all with the red cross on their arms and on their caps.

They seemed very glad to see us arrive.

"Would it be possible to establish an ambulance in this village?" they asked.

"Oh yes," I replied, eagerly. "Monsieur Léonard, take these gentlemen to the school-house. It has been scarcely injured by the fire. And I will run to fetch the women to come and help us, and bring all I can that is likely to be of use."

CHAPTER VIII.

FRIENDS AND FOES.

THE doctor looked very kindly at me, and told me that the waggons contained everything that was required for the wounded. That what was most wanted now was light, and plenty of straw for the poor people to sleep upon, and as many tables as we could provide.

The furniture was still in the school. I ran to the house to fetch other things. The poor German soldier called me. I had almost forgotten him, or at least I only thought of him with the others.

But there was nothing more to be done for him, poor young fellow, than to comfort him in his last moments. One of his legs had been carried off by a ball, and he had been thrust through the body with a bayonet.

I saw, by the light of the moon, a young and handsome face, with large dark eyes which looked intently at me. I knelt down beside him, but I felt powerless to comfort in such misery as this.

"Have they come to the help of the wounded?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied; "you will not be forgotten; but there are so many to attend to."

"Oh, it is not for myself," he said; "there is nothing to be done for me but to leave me here to die quietly. All I want is another draught of cold water . . . and some one to stay by me . . . for the love of God . . . . I cannot bear to die alone . . . in a strange land . . ."

He spoke these words with much difficulty, and in broken accents.

I did not love our enemies while the fighting was going on. I am afraid I hated them, though it was very wicked, when I thought of them killing our poor countrymen and ravaging our country; but when I saw them here, suffering and sorrowful, wounded and dying, so far

from their own country, I think—yes, I think I loved them, and was as sorry for them as for our own soldiers.

He was not to die alone, this poor young German. I had not long to wait beside him, however. I wiped his forehead with the soft linen, and the large drops of perspiration that stood upon it were cold with the cold of death. I laid his head upon my lap, I rubbed his icy hands, I put the cup again to his mouth; but he could no longer swallow; so I dipped a soft cambric handkerchief into the water, and moistened his lips with it.

Just at the very last he revived.

Fixing his large eyes on me, he said, "Have you a lover?"

"Yes," I answered; "he is a soldier too."

"My betrothed is away there — in Germany," he muttered; "so young, so pretty . . . My old mother, too . . . such a good mother—she has no other son . . . and a pretty house . . . and money enough . . . we were to have been married in another week . . . and I never liked the war . . , but one must obey . . ."

"I laid his head upon my lap, I rubbed his icy hands, I put the cup again to his mouth."—*Page* 74.

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I wept, but I could not speak. I did not know what to say. Then suddenly, just as he closed his eyes, it came into my mind to repeat very softly to him, as one would to a child whom one was hushing off to sleep, one of the German hymns which I had learnt in Alsace, when I went there to stay with my mother's relations, and prepare for my first communion with my aunt, who was my god-mother.

"Müde bin ich, geh' zur Ruh,
Schliesse meine Augen zu;
Vater, lass' das Auge dein
Ueber meinem Bette sein.

"Hab' ich unrecht heut' gethan
Sieh es, lieber Gott, nicht an.
Deine Ruth und Christi Blut
Machen alle Schaden gut." *

The young man opened his large eyes once more. A heavenly smile irradiated his dying countenance. He had sufficient strength to join his hands with devotion.

* "I am weary, I am going to rest, I close my eyes; O Father, let thine eye be upon my bed. If I have sinned to-day, lay not, O God, my sin to my charge. Thy rod and the blood of Christ atone for all offences."

"It is like my own country," he murmured, faintly, but distinctly—"in church . . . with Helen . . . the churchyard close by . . . my tomb . . ."

"I will write to Helen," I said; "I will always take care of your grave. Have you her address with you now?"

"Yes," he said, "her letters . . . send them."

"I will do everything," I cried, "as though you were my brother. Do I not know? Have not I my Pierre?"

"Kiss me," he murmured, "for her . . . my Helen. God has sent me one of His angels."

A shudder passed through his whole frame. Then he fell asleep—the sleep of death. Before I moved his head from my lap, I cut a lock of the light brown hair, soft as silk. I cut it, and folded it carefully in a bit of paper for Helen.

She will bless me, I know. It will be her greatest earthly treasure.

Then I remembered what I had to do, and

laying his poor young head softly on the grass, I hastened home.

The women were already there, and old Samuel had come with them. He had been rather offended that we had not sent for him also, fancying we supposed that because he was eighty he could not do anything.

Everybody was ready to set to work. People had forgotten now their own troubles. Leaving those at home to mind the sick ones, I did all I could to help about the wounded.

By four o'clock in the morning they had been all safely transported to the schoolhouse, and beds arranged for them there. The doctor and his assistants were busily engaged in making bandages. They had been to our house, and had attended skilfully to Pierre, who was quite relieved. I feared, however, though he spoke so hopefully about it himself, that he would never be able to use his arm again. But this was not the moment for troubling myself about that. I could only thank God that his life had been spared, and I stifled every feeling

of complaint by remembering how gladly Helen would be in my place. I thought that I would go and help to nurse the wounded soldiers in the schoolhouse as soon as I had finished all I had to do at home.

Our room looked very melancholy when I returned to it. The first pale rays of early dawn were finding their way into it, and the candle had burnt out.

The colonel lay with his eyes open. There was the same look in them which there had been in the poor young German's—the fixed, far-away look, as though he were gazing at something, but not at anything that we could see. His face was as white as any face I had just seen amongst the dead who lay along the way. Pierre was asleep. There was blood on his face, on his hands, on his clothes. One could see what the struggle had been. He awoke, and seeing me standing beside him, he smiled. Such a sad smile! I lighted the fire and set to work to make hot soup. I wanted to make as much as ever I could—as many bowls full as I had bread to put into.

Whilst I was still over the fire, busy at my work, I heard Michael say, "It's all over!"

I turned quickly round, and saw him gently closing his master's eyes, with a touch as soft as a woman's. I went up to him, and would have spoken to him, for I was so sorry for him, but he turned away quickly and went out of the room—Pierre says, that we might not see that he was weeping.

When he came back, Pierre held out his hand to him, and he grasped his hand and then mine.

Then he and I, and little Anna Meyer helping, arranged the body very carefully and reverently in a sheet. I brought out my best for this—the soft fine one grandmother thought would be a family heir-loom. I had often taken pride in exhibiting it to strangers, as a specimen of what grandmother's work yet was, telling them that it should be reserved for the very grandest occasions.

Michael and I laid the colonel in it now, and wound it in soft folds around him. No one thinks about coffins at such times.

We stood for some time looking at him, without any one of us speaking a word.

Michael was the first to break the melancholy silence.

I had observed before that he had taken a handsome pocket-book from one of the pockets of the uniform — such a beautiful uniform! covered with gold, but all stained with blood and dust.

He gave this pocket-book to me now. "I must go back to the war," he said. "I could not leave before, he was so near his end. This will be safe with you. Wait a few days; perhaps I may come back and take it myself to her to whom it must be given. If I should not return, you must open it, and inside you will find an address—the address of a lady. Write to her yourself, and tell her that Michael was with his master—his dear, dear master"—and the voice of the tall strong soldier trembled with emotion—"to the last, and that he died quietly and peacefully, with a happy smile of content upon his face. Tell her that he could not speak; even when I asked him questions he

could not answer them. She will not need words; she knows how he loved her."

There were some drops of the terrible red upon the book. My tears fell beside them and kept them company. I could not speak for crying, and when I looked at Pierre, I thought he could not either. At all events, he said nothing.

At last Pierre reminded me of the soup, and asked me if I was not going to give Michael some. That was the first word spoken. I went back to the fire and poured the hot soup into plates, and gave some to Pierre and to Michael, and it did them good. Then we set to work. Michael said he would not leave us until evening; and oh! how glad we were to have him. No one would have imagined that Pierre had anything the matter with him, he went about so actively. But of course he could not use his arm, and there was a flush on his cheek, and a brightness in his eyes. I am sure he was suffering, though he would not say so, and was too busy to have even a word to say in private to me.

We warmed soup all the morning and carried it to the sick. Oh! how many times we went with our jars to and from the school-house.

Grandmother looked terribly worn, and no one will ever say again that she carries her years well. But she was about all day, helping one of the women at home. The other came backwards and forwards with me and Pierre, Michael, and Monsieur Léonard.

Never shall I forget how gratefully they received us at the ambulance. There were many amongst the wounded who seemed to take out a fresh lease of life after they had eaten the soup, so completely were they revived by it. Oh! if we could only have had more of these unfortunate wounded creatures with us—all the army, and soup enough for every one.

"Do you not think that there are some poor unhappy creatures forgotten?" I said to Michael.

"Of course there may be," he replied, "and that is one of the most dreadful parts of war. That is what the soldier dreads

more than all the shots. Many a poor soul remains buried alive under a dead body. Others fall in lonely places. A stray shot strikes them down perhaps in some corner, in some dark ditch where no one ever thinks of looking. But in this war—thank God for this mercy at all events—there are so many to help, that this calamity will have happened much less frequently, and if any are neglected, it will only be because fighting has been carried on in so many places at once. Thank God, our poor soldiers have been well attended to. I have seen many die myself as carefully tended and comforted as though they had been amongst their own nearest and dearest relations. Women, ladies—many of the highest ladies in the land—have come as sick-nurses to the battle-field, and with the hearts of mothers and sisters, have been as mothers and as sisters to us. God will reward them, and He will reward you," he added; "you have done all you could."

The joyful feeling was stronger than ever then. I thought no more of our losses and

troubles. I did not even think of Pierre's broken arm.

Thus Michael and I talked as we came and went all day. We did not now even look around us: so easily does one grow accustomed to all things.

But a new horror awaited me, and the worst I had yet experienced. It is so different to see a thing, or only to hear it talked about. Both Michael and I started with surprise, and uttered an exclamation of terror, to hear a groan—a deep groan from some one in the cemetery.

In an instant Michael, with one bound, had leaped over the wall into the cemetery.

I did not dare to follow. But I stood by the wall and waited.

I had not yet seen anything so dreadful. A dead body was stretched on the ground—the corpse of a strongly-built, heavy sergeant, stiff and cold in death. Michael made his way rapidly to it, for the groans came from there. A living body lay beneath — a fair young soldier, only slightly wounded, and now

recovered from a deep fainting fit, having awoke to the consciousness that he was being smothered by this heavy weight which he had no power to free himself from.

How thankful I was that Michael was such a powerful man; if it had been Monsieur Léonard I must have gone to help; but he removed the dead body of the old sergeant, and laid the young soldier on the grass, a few paces further off. Then he made a sign to me, and I went and at his request fetched fresh water from the house. After he had taken some, and Michael had moistened his face and hands, and loosened his coat, he revived so completely that he was able to sit up and relate what had happened to him or as much of it as he remembered; for all he knew was that a shot whizzed past him, as he thought, and he grew giddy and was falling, when the soldier in front, shot dead almost at the same instant, fell heavily back upon him, crushing him to the earth. It seemed that the shot, which he imagined had only whizzed past, had in reality struck him in the leg, and wounded him pretty sharply. He

had not felt any pain, so he said--nothing but this whizzing sound, and a sudden giddiness; but this, they say, is often the case. Michael bound up the wound for him, and he was able to walk with but little difficulty to the ambulance, where it was properly dressed, and he was fed and rested. In a few days he had perfectly recovered, and was able to leave.

When he wished me good-bye, I could not help saying to him, "Oh, Munier!"—for that was his name—"be a good boy all your life, and never forget your prayers. It surely should not be for nothing that God has brought you thus back from the dead."

I believe that this was the only case—with us, at least—of any one being forgotten and left alive upon the field.

That afternoon they began the sad work of burying the dead.

Michael, Monsieur Léonard, and I took upon ourselves to bury the colonel and the poor young German soldier. We wished to lay these to their last quiet rest with our own hands. As we left them, I took pleasure in the thought

that they were now sleeping so peacefully side by side, and in the hope that they would appear before God in the last day as brothers in Christ. Oh, how can those bear to fight against each other who feel that they are children of the same heavenly Father, and that the same blessed and merciful Saviour died for both, and left it as His command that they should love one another —that love should be their distinguishing characteristic. But they say that so long as the world lasts there must be war. Well, the necessity does not seem to me to make the thing itself less dreadful. It only makes one long the more for this life to be over, and for the time to come when there will be no more war. I know now why grandmother is so fond of that verse in the Bible which speaks about the blessed time when the people shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. I am sure I shall love that verse too in future.

CHAPTER IX.

THE COLONEL'S WIDOW.

THAT evening Michael wished us a sad farewell, and left. He said he could not be wanting to his duty, and that his place now was with his regiment.

"Will all go back to their regiments?" I asked.

"I am afraid not," he replied; and added with a sad smile, that there was more need for those who knew their duty to do it.

I went upstairs and fetched some of father's best things. They had always seemed, as it were, sacred to me, ever since father had died, and I had laid them by in the chest, with dried lavender in amongst them, and covered them carefully with some of grandmother's finest cloths. She was very particular about the

cloths which she had spun herself. But she never objected to my taking the very best for this purpose. She had often sat by watching me when, from time to time, on fine days, I used to take the things out to air them, and then put them carefully back. There were some fine white shirts amongst them, and some soft, warm vests and stockings, knitted by grandmother with her best wool: she never thought anything too good for father. I used to think that these would all be for Pierre by and by; that grandmother and I would not mind *his* wearing them when I should be his little wife, and grandmother would have a son once more.

But now I chose the warmest and softest, and packed them up in Michael's knapsack. Grandmother sat by in her arm-chair, and watched me. The look on her face was just what it had been that night when she laid her hand on my head and blessed me so solemnly —only more happy, more satisfied.

"Margaret, my child," she said, when I had finished, "fetch the little Testament, and

put it in too. It is so small; it will take no room."

So I fetched father's little Testament, and put it in; and afterwards, when Michael had asked me to go with him to the colonel's grave, and, after kneeling silently for some time beside it, had made me promise that I would keep it fresh and green, I took courage, and said, "Yes, that I would, and bright with flowers, too."

And then I asked him to make me a promise in return.

"Anything," he replied — "anything on earth that I can do for you or any one belonging to you."

"You will read the little Testament," I said; "it was father's. He was a good Christian, and loved God and the blessed Saviour. He has gone where there is no more fighting —to the land of peace. I should like for you and me to meet again there."

"I will read it every day," he said, "and I will remember you and your betrothed, and the good old lady, and the curly-headed little boy, every day in my prayers."

"Now I chose the warmest and softest, and packed them up in Michael's knapsack."—*Page* **91.**

I am sure it was not willingly that he returned to the war. When he grasped Pierre's hand at parting, he said that he envied him. We went a good bit along the road with him, and several times he turned back to wish me good-bye once more.

We have never heard anything more of him, but he knew how to write well, and I am sure he never forgot us. Probably he too fell in one of the many battles which followed each other in such rapid succession.

Poor Michael! How tenderly we all felt towards him. A day's friendship in such a time, and when the heart is so sorrowful, seems like being friends for a lifetime.

I waited, and waited, and no tidings came. I packed up the little pocket-book very carefully, and I sent it to Paris with this letter. It gave me a world of trouble to write, and I tried many times before I could write anything to my mind. It was not for me to tell her how sorry I was for her—how I loved and venerated her because of her terrible grief—and yet it seemed so hard to write and not

say anything about it. At length my letter was written, and grandmother said it would do—

"HONOURED MADAM,—Your noble husband was fatally wounded at the Battle of Sedan. We carried him to our house, and his servant Michael attended to him very carefully all through the night. Next morning he fell asleep very peacefully and happily. We have buried him quite close to our house, under one of our beautiful forest trees, where all is quiet, and we have placed a cross over his grave, which we shall keep fresh with flowers. I have put wreaths of ivy all round, and a white rose tree at the head. Perhaps it will do you good, madam, one day, to come and pray at his grave, where I shall pray every day that God may comfort your heart. If you bring your dear little girl, we have a pretty black goat. It is very quiet, and would play with her, and she could have the milk. My grandmother sends you her sorrowful respects, and bids me tell you that those who will never see war

again, but whom God has taken to heaven, are the happiest, and that we must try and think of that. But I think that one cannot help crying and suffering very much for all that. —Your faithful servant,

"MARGARET MULLER.

"*St. Rémy, Meuse.*"

And now I am expecting the poor sorrowful lady. Almost every night I dream of her. I used never to dream; but now I always do, and often at night I dream that I see this lovely lady arrive—Michael told me that she was so beautiful—pale and sad, and dressed in deep mourning, looking so young that one's heart bled to see her.

When I was folding up the pocket-book, a little letter fell out of it on the floor. I picked it up, and saw that it was in a child's large handwriting, and the word "Juliette," signed in big letters. Michael had told me that that was the name of the colonel's only child, and that she was the sweetest little thing that any one could imagine, and the joy

of her father's heart. I could not help reading the little letter—I read it aloud—and it made us all cry, and I know it by heart—

"My dear Papa,—I have been very good since you have been gone. I am comforting mamma as you told me. I pray to the good God every day to send you home very soon. My doll Amelia is broken. You will buy me a beautiful new one, won't you? We will have a holiday, and plenty of cakes, when you come back from the war.—Your own little

"Juliette."

I replaced it in the pocket-book, and of course I did not touch anything else. But this little letter in the child's large hand, one read it without thinking, and even grandmother did not find fault. Oh! this war! this horrible war!

That night I dreamed I saw the colonel's lady all in white, and lovelier than ever. She came towards me, dressed in a white robe, her face was radiant with happiness, and she held my letter in one hand, and the colonel's pocket-

book in the other. She looked as though she were ready for heaven. What if she should have been taken there? But then, the child —poor little Juliette, what would become of her? Again I cried, "Oh this war! this horrible war!"

It is all over now. The ambulance has left with the last wounded. The dead are all buried in the same place. A wall is to be built around the spot, and I have undertaken the charge of the graves. They shall all be well kept, but the freshest flowers will be for the colonel's grave and the young German soldier's.

The lovely lady is not in heaven yet, but I think she very soon will be. She has been to see us already, though it was a difficult journey. Her father came with her, a handsome, kind gentleman, who I am sure will take care of little Juliette when her mother has gone to join her husband in heaven. She is as lovely as my dream, only still more delicate. She made me tell her everything that had happened, and I was sorry that there was not more to tell.

She seemed to long so much for just one word from the colonel's lips, but we were forced to tell her again that he had never spoken—only smiled, so happily and peacefully. I wish so much she could have seen the look on his face after he was dead, when Michael and I laid him in the sheet. I think it would have comforted her so very much; much more than only to hear of it.

The gentleman wished to reward us, and very handsomely; but of course we refused. The money would have burned my fingers, and my heart too.

But I could not refuse the lady afterwards, when just before she left, she took me aside, and, taking my hand, she drew a ring from her finger, and placed it on mine. She had to put it on my little finger, and it was rather tight for it, though I had observed how loosely it fitted on the second finger of her white hand.

"You will wear that," she said, "for my sake, and for his. And I will pray that you may be happy—that God may bless you. He has been good to you in sparing your betrothed.

If he had been taken your heart would be broken, but not like mine—not like mine."

When she was gone I showed the ring to grandmother. She says it is a diamond, and worth more money than perhaps I could imagine, for I have had so little. But if I were so poor that I had to beg my bread, I would not part with it. I think I shall have it buried with me. Unless indeed, I should have a little Juliette of my own, for if ever God should give me a daughter, I will call her Juliette—I do not know the lady's name—then perhaps when I was dying, I might give it to her. But to no one else.

The lady would have wished to stay at St. Rémy, but of course that could not be. The gentleman told her that she must go to live in Paris with him for his sake and for Juliette's.

But I am sure it will not be for long, and grandmother says so too, and she is not fanciful as Pierre says I am.

Our country people have all returned, I mean those who had fled, and little by little the village is to be rebuilt. They promise us a

good sum of money for this. Every one, they say, is giving liberally towards the good work of assisting the ruined and desolated country people. And we are grateful to them. But alas! there is so much that no money, no sympathy, no kindness can restore. So many shattered homes! So many widowed hearts! So many blighted lives!

All around St. Rémy there are remains of the great battle. Often, as I walk, I stumble over a broken piece of cannon—a crushed shako—or a poor soldier's knapsack, half buried in the earth.

There is no more fighting near us, but the war is far from being over in France. Others are suffering now what we have suffered, and we hear of things so dreadful that they must surely be amongst the horrors of the latter times prophesied by the great prophets of God in the Holy Scriptures.

Every one in our house seems more sad than they were in the time of our worst distress. I suppose it is partly because there was so very much to be done and thought about

for others then that one had not time to think of one's own sorrows. But now grandmother appears quite changed, and a settled gloom seems to be over Pierre, though he evidently tries to shake it off. And it certainly is not right, when we have so much, so very much, to be thankful for. Amidst all the houses that have been either wholly destroyed or dreadfully injured, ours remains untouched; not even the furniture hurt, and all our little family spared to each other. Charlot is cured too of his desire to go to Paris. I suppose, like me, he has had enough excitement and fuss to last him for the rest of his life. He says he will be a good boy now, and say his prayers, and stay quietly at St. Rémy with grandmother and me. It is true that Pierre has lost the use of his arm, but his life is spared, and he is living with us. Farmer Désiré has had the whole of his little property destroyed, so he could not take him in—otherwise, he said he would gladly have done so, for Pierre was always his best workman, and he was much attached to him. And Pierre is an orphan, as

well as I; so grandmother made him come and live with us, and I think she would like us to get married, for she says sometimes to me that she would like to see that day before she goes, and that she feels that her days on earth are indeed numbered now. But Pierre has not said one word of late about marrying, and of course it is for him to speak—not for us; indeed he is so altered—even in his manner to me—that sometimes I am tempted to ask myself whether this dreadful war, that seems to have blasted and blighted all our brightest and most beautiful things, has not changed even him. But I drive away such thoughts, which almost seem like a temptation from the evil one. Pierre has always been so good and kind ever since we were children; and I have loved and trusted him so long. I cannot doubt him now, only it is all very strange, and I am very unhappy.

CHAPTER X.

MONSIEUR LEONARD.

To-day, as I was coming back from the village, thinking, as I am afraid I am getting to do again, chiefly of myself and of my own affairs, though I am sure I ought to have learned a lesson for life, I met Monsieur Léonard walking with little Anna Meyer.

Ever since the ambulance went away, Monsieur Léonard has been living at the schoolhouse, and we have left a little of our furniture there for his use; for his own house, with everything in it, was burnt to the ground. Anna Meyer has stayed with him, to do his little household work and cooking, for the poor woman who used to wait on him in the days when he was schoolmaster, perished in the flames when his house was burnt. That is a

subject Monsieur Léonard can never bear to hear mentioned. I think he reproaches himself most dreadfully for having left her in the house when he fled himself into the forest. She was cooking the dinner, they say, in the little kitchen underground, when the alarm arose, and he never gave her a thought until it was too late to attempt to do anything to save her. But no one ought ever to speak of that now, or even to think of it. We talk of the change that has come over everything in the village, but there is nothing that seems to me more changed than Monsieur Léonard. I used to hate and despise him; now I quite respect him, and I think I even like him; and Anna Meyer quite loves him, as she has good reason to do, for he is like a father to the little orphan girl. Indeed, I sometimes think that it will end by his adopting her; and what a good thing that will be for the poor child, for Monsieur Léonard is comfortably off. He has been putting by money all these years that he has been schoolmaster, with no one to provide for but himself. He stopped to speak to me,

and told me that he was going to send our furniture back in a day or two, for he had hired one of the houses that had already been rebuilt in the village, and was going to furnish it anew.

"And Anna?" I said; "will you send her back too? You know she has a home with us."

"And with me, too," he said, "if she likes to stay. I should like to keep her—all her life, if she likes, or, at all events, till she gets married, as you girls are always in such a hurry to do."

I looked at Anna, and asked her what she thought about it, and she answered very readily—

"I should like to stay with Monsieur Léonard. I have never been so happy in all my life."

I laughed, and said it was very polite to say so to me.

Poor little Anna reddened, and said, "Indeed, I did not mean that. I am sure I was very happy with you—as happy as one could be when such dreadful things were going on. I shall never forget how good you were to me, only . . ."

"You like still better to be with Monsieur Léonard," I said; "and so you ought to, and you are a sensible girl to say so."

"You see," said Léonard, "she is like a daughter to me. She takes care of the house, and keeps me company in the evening . . . and I should feel it dreadfully if I were to lose her now."

"Indeed you would," I said; "and I am sure you will be most happy in your new home. Nothing could be nicer, and grandmother will be delighted."

I was going on my way, feeling quite happy at little Anna Meyer's having found a settled home with Monsieur Léonard, when I was stopped again.

This time it was by neighbour Valnord; and she looked as though she had news to communicate which she felt sure beforehand I should not be well pleased to hear.

"I have just come from your house," she said. "I was greatly disappointed at finding that we had missed each other. It's a good bit of distance from my place."

"Grandmother was at home," I replied.

"Yes," she said; "but I did not want to worry her. She looks bad, too, Margaret, does your good grandmother. It's some time since I'd seen her, and I was struck with the change in her."

"Yes," I replied; "she's very failing now. What was it you had to tell, that you thought it might worry her to hear?"

"It's about the little Bory children," she said. "I'm sorry for it, Margaret, as your mind is so set upon keeping them in the village; but I can't take charge of them any longer, and I don't think you will find anybody that will—not for the bit of payment that one's able to give. You see we've all had our losses, and it's hard work for everybody now. I've been all about the place, and I think it can't be managed."

"If it had not been for grandmother," I said, "I never would have parted with them; but you see how weak she is, and often I could not mind her and the two children together, even with Charlot. And then the baby would

wake her up sometimes at night, just when she had fallen off to sleep, and spoil the bit of rest she might have got. But I'll think what's to be done, and let you know to-morrow."

I spoke to grandmother that evening. In a matter of this kind I was obliged to consult her. She insisted on the children coming back to us, so we fetched them next day, and here they have been all these days; but I can see it tries grandmother dreadfully, though I do all I can to keep them quiet—more than is good for them, I'm afraid; it's so bad for children to be stilled and hushed. Noise is just nature to them, and it's doing them a real injury to keep them from making a noise.

The little Borys have not been long with us. Two or three days after they had returned, Monsieur Léonard and Anna Meyer brought home our furniture in a cart. They found us rather in confusion, and I am afraid I was very cross and disagreeable. I was dreadfully tired that day, for grandmother had been very ailing

—there is no doubt that the children tire her dreadfully—and the little ones had been very troublesome. Little Jacques was so full of play that there was no getting him to keep still for five minutes, and the baby, Martha, was so peevish and fretful there was no quieting her —poor little lamb, she is cutting her eye-teeth, and she was still at the breast when her mother was killed! Martha had told me only that very morning that she would not wean her for anything before she had got all her teeth, because she had such trouble in cutting them, that she thought she would not live through it. Well, she is living through it, but she cries pretty nearly all day, and it's hard work minding her, and that lively little monkey, Jacques, and poor dear old grandmother all at the same time. And Charlot must go to work every day with Pierre. If it were not for the boy, Pierre could do very little, for strength does not come back to his arm; but with the boy's help he manages to do something to earn his living, and there's plenty of work to be had now.

Well, as I was saying, I was dead beat the

day Léonard and Anna Meyer brought back our things. I had just got the children quiet over their supper. Jacques was perched up at the table devouring his bowl full of bread and milk, and grandmother was feeding baby Martha, and I had sat down on the stool before the fire to rest, if it was only for five minutes, before I set to work to get my charge, young and old, into their beds, and settled for the night.

It made me cross to be disturbed, and I really had scarcely strength to help to get the things out of the cart, and bring them into the house. I have not been nearly so strong since the war as I used to be.

I know I spoke sharply and peevishly to good Monsieur Léonard and dear little Anna. Over-fatigue makes one so irritable, and that is why I think people should try and leave off work when they have not got a bit more strength left to do it, for going on makes them injure their souls, which is worse than only injuring their bodies, as they were doing before.

Afterwards I was sorry for my sharp words,

"I had just got the children quiet over their supper, and I had sat down on the stool before the fire to rest."—*Page* 112.

and I said so; I told them I knew I had spoken very rudely and disagreeably, but it was not because I felt unkindly towards them; on the contrary, my heart was full of kindly thoughts, only I was very tired—quite done up. I had had such a fatiguing time of it with grandmother and the children.

They were very kind. Monsieur Léonard said, "I'm sure I don't wonder you're done up, you do a great deal too much for your strength, after all you've gone through."

And Anna kissed me, and said, "Yes, indeed you do, Margaret. You're working yourself to death, and you must not do it. I'm sure I can't spare you for one. Though I've got a father now, I haven't got any mother but you. You're my own dear little mother."

Their kind words cheered me so much that when they had gone, I set to work with a new will. It's wonderful what courage a good word will put into one.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ORPHANS.

THE children were not in bed before I saw Monsieur Léonard coming back with the empty cart.

"We've come for little Jacques," said Léonard, "and we'll fetch the girl in the morning."

I could not speak for surprise.

"Your hands are too full," he continued, "and Anna and I will take care of the little ones till they are a little more free. We've arranged it all on our way home, and we've come for the little man now; Anna will take him into her room, and to-morrow we'll fetch the small one, cradle and all."

And going into the kitchen, he asked

Jacques whether he would not like to come and live in his fine new house.

"Is there anybody sick there?" the child asked, "or may I make a noise?"

"As much as you like," replied Léonard; "I'm going to begin school to-morrow, and you'll be with Anna. She'll let you do pretty much as you like, I fancy."

And he gave quite a fatherly glance at Anna, who by this time had got baby Martha into her arms. The little thing crowed with delight, as Anna danced her in the air. The children have been so much with Anna all this time that they are more fond of her than they are of me.

So they carried off little Jacques then and there, and next morning they came for baby Martha. It grieved me to part with her; but I hope to get her back one day, as Léonard says, when my hands will be a little less full, and the children will both be much better taken care of there. Anna Meyer loves them with all her heart, and is so happy to have them. "Now I'm a little mother too," she said, when we handed the baby to her in the cart, "and you'll

see what a good one I shall make. And Mr. Léonard will be grandpapa, and we'll all be as happy as kings."

I did not think that kings were very happy, but certainly Anna was, and it did me good to see her.

They went away in high spirits, and I stood and watched them.

To think of Monsieur Léonard turning father to one orphan, and grandfather to two others! Of all men in the world, that *he* should take this charge upon himself—he that was considered the stingiest and most selfish of men.

"Grandmother," I said, after I got back into the kitchen, "I see now that even the war can do great good."

"What do you mean, child?" she asked, though I believe she knew what I was thinking of.

"It has made a new man of Monsieur Léonard," I said; "he is just as kind, and liberal, and courageous now, as he used to be the contrary."

"There's some wood that needs sharp tools

before it can be carved?" she answered, "there's some iron that needs a hot fire before it can be moulded, but once worked, the toughest materials often make the most useful instruments. I dare say it will be so with Monsieur Léonard."

"I'm sure it will," I said; "indeed it is so now."

It certainly was. When Pierre and Charlot came home at dinner-time, and we told them where the children were gone, Pierre exclaimed, "Well, that is surprising! We too had something to tell about Monsieur Léonard. He has been setting up the school-children with new clothing and shoes, that there may be no more time lost in getting them back to school, and he is going to allow the old father of his servant who was burnt in his house, four francs a week, and he is to have his dinner from their table every day."

"By their fruits ye shall know them." That is a verse I have read many times in the little Testament I gave to poor Michael.

Monsieur Léonard had never said a word to

me about sorrow for the past, or what he meant to do in future. But I knew this trouble had made another man of him. And here are the proofs of it.

CHAPTER XII.

THE EXPLANATION.

GRANDMOTHER is failing fast. She grows weaker and weaker every day. I'm afraid she may not live to see Pierre and me married.

We have had a great explanation together, Pierre and I. How thankful I am that it is over! Things seemed to be growing worse between us every day, and I could not bear it any longer. There are some troubles that one has no heart to bear. I think these are the trials that are of one's own making, and not of God's sending.

Pierre had gone on living at our house. He paid for his board, and grandmother was always insisting on it that he paid too much; but he declared that he would rather go away than pay

a penny less; and grandmother would not hear of his leaving; she said it would make her miserable. She saw he had something on his mind, and I think she guessed what it was. Often he would sit before the fire for ever so long without saying a word, and then suddenly get up and go out of the house, and stay away till we sent Charlot to look for him, when the child would find him walking up and down our little paddock, as though he were in greater trouble now than ever he had been during the fighting.

Sometimes he would seem just like his old self, and be so good and dear to me, that my heart felt as light as a feather, and I could not help breaking out into some of my old songs over my work, as in the happy bygone days; but, as sure as ever this was the case, he would grow more gloomy than ever immediately afterwards; and sometimes he would speak almost angrily, as though he were vexed with me, until at times my heart felt like to break. At length, one evening, my courage failed me, and my sorrow made me selfish enough to lay my

head in grandmother's lap, and with a burst of tears tell her how unhappy I was.

And then grandmother told me what she thought about it, and I saw directly that she was right. The load was off my heart at once, before I had said a word to Pierre. Yes, that is it. His arm is paralysed for ever, not only for a time, as he hoped at first. I had thought as much. Now I understood all about it.

That evening I spoke to him.

"Pierre," I said, my heart beating faster than it had beat during all these past weeks—"Pierre, don't you think we ought to be thinking of beginning housekeeping before the winter sets in, and giving grandmother this last happiness in life—the joy of seeing us happy?"

What a sigh he gave!

"Margaret," he said, "you must not think any more about me;" and he glanced at his poor arm, which hung lifeless by his side.

"Not think about you!" I exclaimed, "but I do—more than ever;" and I put my hand within his good arm.

"Margaret," he continued, "I thought I

should have recovered perfectly. And so the doctors thought at first. I did so long for it too, and you know whether I was a good workman or not; but now, Margaret, I'm good for nothing—a poor useless fellow, who has lost his right arm, and needs a child's help to enable him to earn a few honest pence. A fine sort of husband I should make to set up housekeeping with . . . with such a girl as you!"

"Oh, Pierre, Pierre," I cried, "and don't you know me better than this, after all these years! and when one gives one's troth to the man one loves, is it not for better or for worse, as God may see fit to send? and when trouble comes, is one therefore to separate what God has joined; would any one wish to do it—would I? No, Pierre, let what will come, fine weather or bad, I am to be your wife, and I'm able to work for both;" and I burst into mingled tears of indignation, sorrow, and happiness.

Pierre did not seem to know how to comfort me, so he took me to grandmother, and this time we both knelt beside her, and she comforted us

"I burst into mingled tears of indignation, sorrow, and happiness. Pierre did not seem to know how to comfort me."—*Page* 124.

both and then blessed us—such a blessing, the best she ever gave me. I am sure it was the good God who told her what to say. She seems now to have done with earth, and only to think about heaven, like the holy pastor the missionary gentleman told us of, who said, before he died, that he was standing just outside the door, waiting for his Father to open it to him.

It is all settled. Pierre and I are to be married next week. Monsieur Léonard says he will be a father to me on the occasion; it is wonderful how quickly the good man's family has increased. Anna Meyer is to be my bridesmaid, and the little Borys are to dance at my wedding.

It is strange that Helen's answer to my letter should have just come to-day. She says she could not write before, but now she is beginning to feel that there are some sorrows greater than hers. There are wives and lovers whose dear ones have never returned, and who have had no tidings of them, not one last word or token. Helen does not think like poor

Madame Dolbène, the colonel's widow. She says that if the war had only come a month later, one little month, then they would have been married, and that now she would be happier. But when I told grandmother this, she said that this was because Helen did not know which was the greater grief, and that Madame Dolbène did. She says there is no comparison between the two sorrows, and that I shall say so too in a month's time, if I am as happy with Pierre as she is sure I shall be.

I am glad poor Helen's letter came to-day. She is so thankful to have had mine, and the lock of hair; and she says such loving, grateful words about me. They seem like another blessing upon me and Pierre.

THE END.

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